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NO BREAKTHROUGH IN 14TH INDIA-CHINA BORDER TALKS

The Corps Commander-level meeting was held at the Chushul-Moldo border meeting point on the Chinese side on Wednesday

STAGE SET FOR NEXT ROUND OF TALKS

With the dialogue failing to move forward, both sides decided to hold the next round of the commanders' talks at the earliest possible date. "The two sides agreed to stay in close contact and maintain dialogue via military and diplomatic channels and work out a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues at the earliest," said a joint statement issued on Thursday

TROOPS TO REMAIN IN FRICTION POINTS

- Army Chief General M M Naravane had said on Wednesday that India was hopeful of resolving issues related to disengagement at Patrolling Point 15 (Hot Springs) in Ladakh in the latest talks
- The 13th round of Corps Commander-level talks held on October 10, 2021 had also ended in a stalemate | P9

50,000-60,000

TROOPS EACH SIDE HAS DEPLOYED ALONG THE LINE OF ACTUAL CONTROL IN LADAKH

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

KPCC chief D K Shivakumar, flanked by Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, Siddaramaiah, and other Congress leaders, addresses the gathering outside the party's Ramanagar office on Thursday | VINOD KUMAR T

On back foot, Cong halts padayatra

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI @ Bengaluru

A day after being rapped by the Karnataka High Court, the state Congress on Thursday suspended its big ticket Mekedatu padayatra at Ramanagara. But the leadership claimed that it is being stopped only for now, in the light of the high court's observations on public health and hopes to resume the padayatra once the third wave of Covid-19 passes off.

The HC, while hearing a public interest petition on Wednesday, had questioned the government if it was incapable of stopping the padayatra which had continued despite FIRs being filed against Congress leaders. The court had also questioned the Congress if it had obtained permission to take out the padayatra.

Sensing strong action by the court, Opposition leader Siddaramaiah and KPCC president D K Shivakumar returned to Bengaluru on Wednesday evening and held discussions with the party leaders in Delhi who suggested that the padayatra be stopped, sources said. AICC general secretary in charge of Karnataka, Randeep Singh Surjewala, who is in home isolation after contracting the virus, spoke to both Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar over phone and advised them to take an appropriate decision, the sources added.

On Thursday, the party, which had given a call to its members to continue with the padayatra, held a meeting in Ramanagara and decided to stop it for the time being and take it up later on when Covid-19 cases decline.

CONTINUED ON: P4

4TH FIR FILED AGAINST 30 CONG MEN

A fourth First Information Report (FIR) was filed against 30 Congress leaders, including party state unit chief DK Shivakuma, for taking part in the Mekedatu padayatra violating Covid-19 restrictions imposed in the state. P4

Strategise to save livelihood: PM

Suggests local containment, steps that insulate the economy

FACTOIDS

2,47,417
New cases in the country as on Thursday morning

13.11%
Daily positivity rate

10.80%
Weekly Positivity Rate

HEALTH INFRA EXPANDED

Utilising the ₹23,000 crore package sanctioned by the Centre earlier to revamp health infra, over 800 paediatric units, 1.5 lakh new ICU and HDU beds, more than 5,000 special ambulances and over 950 liquid medical oxygen storage tank capacity have been added across the country so far

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ADVISING heightened alert to avoid panic situations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his first meeting with chief ministers since the outbreak of the Omicron variant of Covid-19, suggested adopting local containment strategies that have the least impact on livelihood and the economy.

He also urged them to be prepared for future variants of the virus as it mutates very fast.

"The earlier confusion about Omicron is slowly getting cleared now. The Omicron variant is infecting the general public many times faster than the earlier variants. We have to be alert, be careful, but we also have to take care that there is no panic situation," Modi said, whose closing remarks were broadcast on social media.

Stressing that the Centre and states are dealing with the pandemic for two years now, Modi urged chief ministers to stick the past practices and work collectively. "The way the Central and state governments had adopted a pre-emptive, proactive and collective approach, the same is the mantra of victory this time as well. The more we can limit the corona infection, the less the problem will be," he said.

Underscoring the point that economic activities should not be disrupted, Modi sought to nudge chief ministers to avoid lockdown situations. While Delhi has imposed weekend curfew, other states, too, have announced various restrictions, including night curfew.

"While making any strategy, it is very important to keep in mind that there should be minimum damage to the livelihood of the common people. Economic activities and momentum of the economy should be maintained. So, it will be better to focus more on local containment," he said, while stressing that thrust should be on providing maximum treatment in home isolation.

Vaccination, he said, is the only counter to the pandemic, adding the first dose has been administered to about 92% of the adult population.

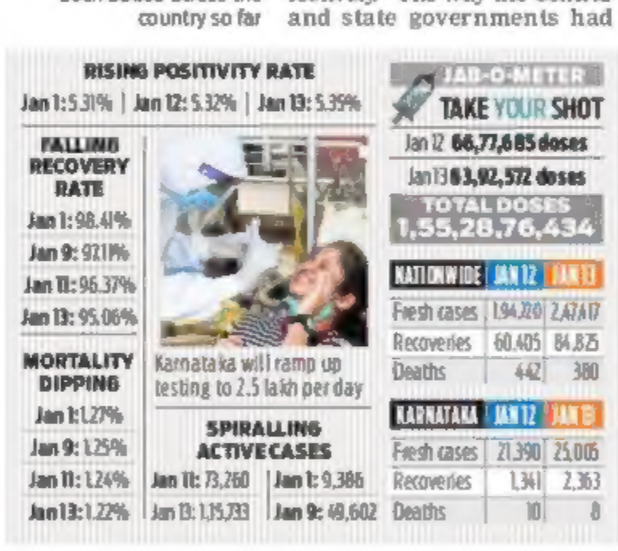
CM: K'taka's 5T formula appreciated

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi has appreciated Karnataka's 5T (testing, tracking, tracing, triaging and technology) strategy for Covid-19 management, during the interaction via conferencing on Thursday, Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai has said.

Bommai, who is under home isolation, has been working from home for the past few days and explained the measures taken by the Karnataka government to tackle the rising cases.

He also mentioned about the increase in testing and vaccination which is much more than the national average. The PM appreciated Karnataka's testing and vaccination drive, said a statement from the Chief Minister's Office. P4


RISING POSITIVITY RATE
Jan 1: 5.31% | Jan 12: 5.32% | Jan 13: 5.39%
FALLING RECOVERY RATE
Jan 1: 98.41%
Jan 9: 97.19%
Jan 11: 96.37%
Jan 13: 95.06%
MORTALITY DIPPING
Jan 1: 1.27%
Jan 9: 1.25%
Jan 11: 1.24%
Jan 13: 1.22%
Karnataka will ramp up testing to 2.5 lakh per day
SPIRALLING ACTIVE CASES
Jan 11: 73,260 | Jan 1: 9,386
Jan 13: 1,15,733 | Jan 9: 48,602
JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
Jan 12 66,77,685 doses
Jan 13 63,92,572 doses
TOTAL DOSES 1,55,28,76,434
NATIONWIDE | JAN 12 | JAN 13
Fresh cases | 1,94,720 | 2,47,417
Recoveries | 60,405 | 84,825
Deaths | 442 | 380
KARNATAKA | JAN 12 | JAN 13
Fresh cases | 21,390 | 25,005
Recoveries | 1,341 | 2,363
Deaths | 10 | 8

Fresh Covid-19 cases doubling faster in state during third wave

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Covid-19 infection of the Omicron variant, although milder than other variants, is most likely to infect a huge number of people. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar said the doubling rate in the third Covid-19 wave is much faster than the previous two waves in Karnataka.

In the first wave, it took 10-12 days for the fresh case count to double on an average, while in the second wave it took eight days. But now, cases are doubling in 2 to 2.5 days, he pointed out.

Explaining the trajectory of how the third wave took off, Sudhakar said that on December 28 last year, Bengaluru reported 269 cases while the rest of the state reported 87 cases.

A week later, Bengaluru reported 3,605 cases, while the rest of the state reported 641 cases.

CONTINUED ON: P3

CRISIS CONTINUES

OBC bleeding on in UP BJP, one more quits

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

THE saga of defections of disgruntled ministers and MLAs in Uttar Pradesh just ahead of elections, after having enjoyed a full term of five years, continued on Thursday with minister Dharam Singh Saini quitting the Yogi Adityanath government and two MLAs — Mukesh Verma (Shikohabad) and Vinay Shakya (Bidhuna) — resigning from the BJP.

While OBC leader Saini cited the BJP-led government's alleged neglect of the backward class, the two MLAs also gave similar reasons. All three are expected to join the Samajwadi Party. With this, the number of leaders who have left the BJP has risen to 13. According to sources, BJP MLA from Dhaurahara Bala Prasad Awasthi is also planning to quit. Notably, most of the deserters had defected to the BJP from the BSP in 2017 just before the polls.

Saini won the 2002 and 2007 elections from Sarsawa in Saharanpur as a BSP candidate. He was shifted to Nakur in 2012 where he defeated Congress strongman Imran Masood. He won from Nakur again on a BJP ticket in 2017.

AAP's PUNJAB CM CANDIATE

AAP leader Arvind Kejriwal launched a phone-in service for Punjabis to suggest AAP's CM candiate, even as he said his choice is Bhagwant Mann

UNNAO RAPE VICTIM'S MOM IN CONGRESS LIST

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said on Thursday the mother of the Unnao rape victim is among the first list of candidates for UP polls | P10

Rescue operation under way after Bikaner Express derailed at Mainaguri in Jalpaiguri on Thursday | PTI

SIX DEAD AS TRAIN DERAILS IN BENGAL

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata / New Delhi / Guwahati

AT least six persons were killed and dozens injured after Guwahati-bound Bikaner Express via Patna was on Thursday derailed and four of its coaches rolled into a ditch beside the railway tracks at Maynaguri in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district, around 680 km from Kolkata.

Jalpaiguri District Magistrate Moumita Godara Basu said around 45 passengers were injured in the accident. Sources said the casualties might go up as the condition of 15 injured was critical.

The Railways has ordered a high-level inquiry into the accident.

According to sources, the train was not at high speed when the accident happened. "After Siliguri, there is speed restriction as the railway tracks pass through elephant corridors in Dooars forest," said an official.

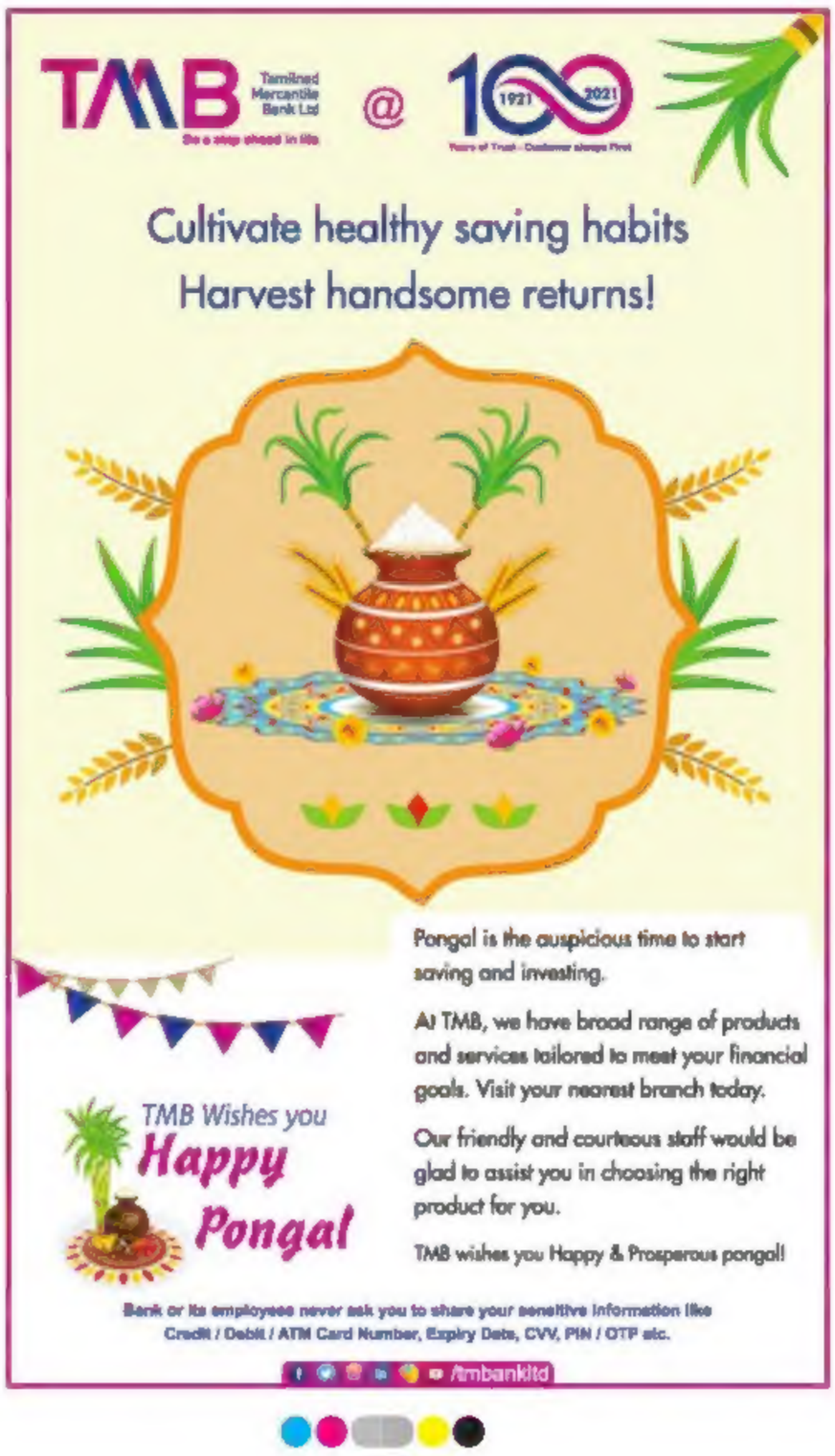
A senior technical officer with the Indian Railways in Delhi said derailment of such grave magnitude generally occurs when tracks are defective or not maintained properly. One of the rescue team members who reached the site after 30 minuets of derailment said the locals had already started the rescue operation. "It was like a thunderbolt. We all fell on each other. There were cries all over," said Manua Das, who was rescued by locals. Another passenger who escaped unhurt said, "It was as if a major earthquake occurred inside the train."

Bablu Das, a local youth, said he and his friends dragged out many injured from he ill-fated coaches. P10

EXPRESS READ

Delhi HC stays opaque Chess League tender

New Delhi: The Delhi High Court has stayed the All India Chess Federation's (AICF) tender to organise the 'Indian Chess League', 'Online Chess League' and 'Chess in School' after a petition was filed charging the federation with refusal to clearly inform bidders about the nature of contract and the scope of work.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